WALLY HERGER
2D DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA
PLEASE REPLY TO:
☐ WASHINGTON OFFICE:
2433 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
(202) 225-3076
DISTRICT OFFICES:
☐ 55 INDEPENDENCE CIRCLE, SUITE 104
CHICO, CA 95973
(530) 893-8363
☐ 410 HEMSTED DRIVE, SUITE 115
REDDING, CA 96002
(530) 223-5898

COMMITTEE ON
WAYS AND MEANS

COMMITTEE ON
THE BUDGET

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515–0502

Testimony of
Wally Herger
Member of Congress

Resources Subcommittee on Water and Power
Hearing on CALFED Bay-Delta Program
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In November of 1998 the California Department of Water Resources issued a Water Plan Update known as Bulletin 160-98. I would like to begin my comments by citing a passage from the executive summary of this document.

"Bulletin 160-98 estimates that California's water shortages at a 1995 level of development are 1.6 million acre feet in ***average*** water years, and 5.1 million acre feet in ***drought*** years. . . Bulletin 160-98 forecasts increased shortages by 2020 – 2.4 million acre feet in an average water year and 6.2 million acre feet in drought years." (Executive Summary, California Water Plan Update, Bulletin 160-98 at ES1-2.)

California's increasing population is the driving force behind these increasing water demands. Projections indicate that an additional 15 million people will move to California by the year 2020 – equivalent to the populations of 8 western states: Arizona, Nevada, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, New Mexico and Utah.

These figures are cause for grave concern. While CALFED is primarily tasked with addressing the critical needs of the Bay-Delta, it is clear that when it comes to water, everything is connected to everything else. We cannot address the very real and critical environmental needs of the Bay-Delta without taking a comprehensive approach.

CALFED representatives have often stated that there is no single "magic bullet solution" to California's water woes. I agree with this assessment. The problems are complex, and the solutions will be varied and complex. However, CALFED also maintains that it is "premature" to make any hard and firm plans for storage. I profoundly disagree. Given the scope of the projected water shortages, it is glaringly obvious that we must put more water into the system if we are going to have any hope of avoiding chronic and potentially debilitating water shortages.

Issues of "process" should not be used to paper over the extremely obvious reality that California needs additional water now, and that this water deficit will only be exacerbated as the state gains a projected 15 million new residents by 2020.

Bulletin 160-98 notes that "water management options identified as likely to be implemented could reduce those shortages to 200,000 acre feet in average water years and 2.7 million acre feet in drought years." (Executive Summary at ES1-2.)

But the questions remain, how and when, exactly?

DWR states that "new storage facilities are an important part of the mix of options needed to meet California's future needs." (Executive Summary at ES5-13.) But where will this storage come from if CALFED is going to wait until the effect of stage 1 actions is determined? In fact, Bulletin 160-98 states, "Given the long lead time required for implementing large storage projects, no CALFED facilities may be in service within the Bulletin's 2020 planning horizon." (Executive Summary at ES5-9.)

This storage will not materialize out of thin air. Are we to presume that private parties or local agencies are going to somehow create this body of stored water? How can this phantom storage be counted as "likely" for planning purposes? This is akin to a college student presuming it is "likely" that he will win the lottery to finance his education. Misplaced optimism is no virtue.

While CALFED representatives have consistently stated that increased storage must be part of the equation, I have seen no meaningful evidence that storage is being vigorously and actively pursued as a pressing and urgent goal. Indeed, Bulletin 160-98 leads me to believe that, rather than the "likely" development of storage, CALFED's current direction virtually guarantees that storage is highly **unlikely** for another two decades.

I am frankly exasperated by this continuous foot-dragging, dithering, and paralysis. As a native of Northern California, I know the question is not a matter of **if** we are going to have another drought, but **when.**

While I support prudent water conservation, we must face the fact that we are quickly reaching the practical limits of water conservation strategies, many of which have been in effect for decades. Looking to conservation as the solution to each of our legitimate water needs – as is often the mantra of the extreme environmental community – is shortsighted and irresponsible. And we cannot just "take the water from agriculture." Unfortunately, there is no way to grow food without water. As such, taking water from agriculture would severely impact California's $30 billion agriculture economy. Destroying California's agriculture industry, which provides nearly one out of every ten jobs in our state, is not a reasonable solution to our water problems.

Further dividing the already inadequate water supply is a non-solution. We must have additional water storage in order to meet our needs in a responsible, realistic, and comprehensive fashion. This Congress should be extremely reluctant to continue supporting CALFED unless we see an unambiguous and immediate commitment to significant water storage – in the millions of

acre-feet. Indeed, precisely because DWR is correct in identifying the "long lead time required for implementing large storage projects," the time to act is **now**, not some year in the distant future.

It is my understanding that negotiations are ongoing between the Secretary of the Interior and the Governor of California to develop a solution for long-term implementation of the CALFED program. Given the shortages that face us, however, any proposed CALFED Agreement that does not provide for genuine increases in total water storage for the future will not be acceptable. Moreover, any Agreement that does not improve water supplies in the short-term, and that does not provide regulatory certainty, is also not acceptable.

##END##

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